

They think that after their wonderful prayer God must answer them immediately. But God has a word of rebuke for them first. They have said, "We are yours from of old"(63:19). God says, "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me, I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations--a people who continually provoke me to my very face. . . ." (65:1-3). God does not reject their prayer altogether, but he does reject certain aspects of it. His answer relates- itself to the words of their petition. It was such an unworthy petition that He must first rebuke them.

There is something missing in their prayer. Most of it is good, but it is unbalanced. It needs more confession of sin, more repentance of sin and the desire to turn from it and asking that by His grace they will not fall into it again. It needs more of that note. There is some but not as much as there should be. Their basic approach is, "We are yours from of old; but you have not ruled over them, they have not been called by your name" (63:19). Instead of think of themselves as God's pets for whom God will do everything because He loves them, they are to think of themselves as God's instruments, God's pattern and means of bringing the bospel to the world. They are the means of preparing the way for the coming of His Son. They have a special blessing and place as His people, but they are not to compare themselves with others and say, "We are better than these others; we deserve the blessing because we are His and they are not." This is the wrong attitude and the wrong approach and this makes their prayer unbalanced because they omit the primary thing almost entirely. It looks as if they are blaming God for their sin and saying, "God you put us in this situation; now it is up to you to get us out of it."

God does not deny them their request but first He gives them a rebuke. There are many fine things in their prayer, but their ~~own~~ basic approach is wrong and this deserves God's rebuke. There is no break between chapter 64 and chapter 65, except for the fact that the prayer of the nation Israel concludes at the end of chapter 64. God's answer begins in 65:1. The people are saying, "We are yours . . . they have not been called by your name" so do something for us. God replies, taking up the very words they used, &